DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 261 CS 510 313

AUTHOR Barnett-Theodori, Jacqueline M.
TITLE Communicating Diversity: A Study of the Multicultural Climate in a Summer Academic Program.
PUB DATE 2000-04-00
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association (Pittsburgh, PA, April 27-30, 2000).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Pluralism; *Diversity (Institutional); *Educational Environment; *Ethnicity; Higher Education; Policy Analysis; Summer Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Identity (Psychological); Student Attitude Inventory

ABSTRACT

A study examined multiculturalism and diversity through accommodations for minority and international students in LEAP (Learning Edge Academic Program), a six-week summer program for freshmen at a major Eastern university. Subjects included administrators, mentors, instructors, and students, who were interviewed regarding their perceptions on the issues. Program and university policy documents were examined as well. Results indicated five themes: (1) diverse vs. mainstream culture; (2) reality vs. expectations; (3) diversity awareness vs. lack of awareness; (4) education; and (5) identity. Findings suggest that differences in minority vs. majority perceptions exist, including differences in metaphor usage, different ideas of American culture, and different definitions of diversity. Additional research should entail a larger, more comprehensive study including more thorough examination of multicultural aspects and more implementation of policy statements. (Contains 12 references and a table comparing major themes and metaphors.) (EF)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 441 261

Communicating Diversity: A Study of the Multicultural Climate in a Summer Academic Program

Jacqueline M. Barnett-Theodori

Running Head: Communicating Diversity

Affiliation: Texas A & M University

This paper was presented at the Eastern Communication Association, April 27-30, 2000, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. All correspondence should be directed to the author. She can be reached via phone at (979) 862-8626 or via email at j-theodori@tamu.edu or at the following address: 202A Bolton, Mail Stop #4234, Department of Speech Communication, Texas A & M University, College Station, TX 77843-4234.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. M. B. Theodori

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS 510 313

Communicating Diversity: A Study of the

Multicultural Climate in a Summer Academic Program

INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the phenomena of multiculturalism and diversity in a six-week summer program known as the Learning Edge Academic Program, or LEAP, for beginning university students. The program allows incoming freshmen meeting criteria such as above-average SAT scores and high academic achievements in high school to be a part of the LEAP project. The students register for two classes that are integrated through an inter-disciplinary approach of the two instructors collaborating together. The instructors combine common themes from the two fields and provide connections to each other's course. By taking six credits during the six-week period, the new students begin preparing for college while in a more supportive environment. Part of this supportive environment, having a student mentor, can help make the "adjustment period" an easier transition. The upperclassman student mentor is assigned to each group of students, which is known as a "pride." The mentor lives in the same dormitory with the pride of students, attends both classes with the students, and helps the students with academic and social adjustment. Each pride consists of about 20-23 students. The students are asked to participate in activities organized for that pride by their mentor as well as activities for the entire LEAP program. Student perceptions of diversity and multiculturalism in the program and their descriptions from their backgrounds provided the researchers with insight into their perceptions of the cultural aspects of the LEAP program.

To understand the cultural climate of the LEAP program, we hypothesized that terms such as "identity," "diversity," "multiculturalism," and "ethnicity" would emerge from

our data. Clarification of these terms in the way the researchers used them to construct the method of data collection, and later the analyses, became necessary. First, "identity" signified how one saw himself/herself within a particular context such as a culture or as part of a society. This definition was adopted from Golden, Niles, and Hecht (1998). Golden et al. (1998) discussed Jewish American identity and described the function of identity on many levels. These levels included how one feels about herself/himself, how s/he wants others to see and regard her/him, how her/his actions represent the person, and how s/he is connected to a particular community or context. This perspective of identity became important in asking questions in the in-depth interviews.

Second, the paper's definitions of diversity stem from the ideology that different racial, ethnic, gendered, languaged-based, geographic, and socioeconomic distinctions constitute our societies (Agada, 1998). Third, "multicultural" depicts a blend of different ethnic traditions and views of life. "Multiculturalism" in this study is used to denote acceptance of diversity within cultural groups without devaluation of similar beliefs and values (Young, 1998). Brady (1995) and Kanpol (1994) argued that a true multicultural education is a critical education since it is the only type of education that can help foster a critical understanding of diversity and its many related issues. The field of multicultural and diversified education tackles many of these issues in addition to defining the meaning of adopting a multicultural trend in education.

Finally, the usage of "ethnicity" revolves around ethnic identity, a separate entity from race. Rotheram-Borus and Wyche (1994) distinguished between the two concepts. They defined race as an affiliation based on skin color and other physical, unchangeable characteristics. However, they argued that ethnicity represents an identification with a group based on properties other than just the physical: religion, common ancestry, language, or national origin.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn how the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity are likely to contribute to better teaching and learning in the LEAP program. If cultural understanding has an ability to increase the quality of education among students, it may be of importance to curriculum design. However, depending on how diversity and multiculturalism are viewed, these dimensions could create barriers to communication if they are perceived to foster segregation when promoted. For example, leaders in religious or ethnic organizations coordinate and promote activities such as dinners, dances, and parties to celebrate their diversity. However, the perception of exclusion and segregation emerge if those whose religious beliefs or ethnicity attend and/or are the only individuals invited to such events.

Background

The six-week summer program LEAP at a large, northeastern university was the basis for the study. The research takes an in-depth look at the program itself as a multicultural experience. Hence, the first research question emerged:

R1: How are multiculturalism and diversity reflected in the LEAP program?

In order to create a picture of program in ethnographic tradition, the key players in LEAP were represented. These included students, mentors, faculty, and administrators. In an attempt to understand how the key players felt that multiculturalism and diversity were reflected in the LEAP program, the second research question was asked:

R2: How are multiculturalism and diversity perceived by faculty, administrators, mentors, and students in the LEAP program?

Also examined were policy documents from both the university and the LEAP program. The researcher and colleagues compared these documents to what administrators and mentors indicated in interviews as the goals and agenda of the

program. Although the researchers were not "immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people" (Creswell, 1998, p. 58), they were confident that the intensive, multi-layered methods and analyses provided valuable insights into the nature of the program.

Lastly, adequately addressing transition and the adjustment period are often main concerns in summer programs like this one (Logan & Salisbury-Glennon, 1999). In addition to adjustment to college life, minority students, particularly freshmen, need to feel that there is a multicultural and diverse environment. Therefore, the third research question was asked:

R3: Does LEAP promote multiculturalism and diversity, and thereby provide a facilitating environment for new students, particularly minority students?

METHODS

Sample

Because it would be impossible to observe, conduct in-depth surveys, and perform intensive interviews with the 400+ students in the program, the researchers chose stratified purposeful sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) by seeking input from one pride of students. We chose this method of sampling because subgroups have a tendency to emerge (in our case, majority and the minority students). This stratification aids in comparison, which formed the basis of our analyses. One particular pride exhibited the most "diverse" group of students: 6 minority students out of 20 students in the class were identified. This group of students was enrolled in a public speaking course and an introduction to philosophy course; one of the researchers was also the public speaking instructor for this pride.

Additionally for the study, two faculty members representing "mainstream white culture" and one international faculty member were interviewed regarding their perception of the LEAP program in promoting diversity. Two administrators were selected based on their positions with LEAP: one administrator was the overall

coordinator of the LEAP program and the other worked with LEAP faculty. Finally, two mentors were chosen based on their prior experience with LEAP (both had participated in LEAP as incoming students the previous summer). One was targeted because she was only one of two African-American mentors; the other was a Caucasian.

Data Collection

One of the researchers conducted three classroom observations of her colleague's public speaking class at different points in the session: on the second day of class, during the second week of class, and during the third week of class. By staggering the observations, the researchers hoped to obtain various cultural aspects of the course classroom environment. During the second observation period the instructor and her class discussed cultural diversity and communication. The participant-observer/researcher recorded notes during every observation.

To recruit students from the selected pride, the public speaking instructor (also a researcher in this study) explained the nature of the study during the first few days of class. All of the students (N = 20) agreed to be a part of the study by writing about their past experiences with culture and diversity. A week into the six-week session, the instructor asked for volunteers to answer open-ended survey questions pertaining to their perceptions of diversity in the LEAP program. A reward of extra credit was offered. Eight students (including two minority students) participated in the survey.

During the latter part of the second week of the session, one of the colleagues electronically mailed the six minority students in the course, explained her background in multicultural educational research, and identified her own issues and struggles as a minority in the United States. She asked for permission to talk with them about their personal experiences with multicultural education, adaptation to and/or struggles with the mainstream cultural environment, issues with parental conflict and identity, and their perceptions and expectations of the LEAP. Five of the six students emailed her back

and arranged for interview times. The five student interviews were audio recorded.

At the beginning of the second week of the six-week LEAP program, the researcher/speech instructor met with three other faculty members to talk about their perceptions of LEAP and diversity within the program. Each was asked to talk about how if and how each felt she provided a multicultural learning environment for their students and how she perceived the students' attitudes regarding diversity issues. These interviews were audio recorded.

During the third and fourth week of the LEAP session, two interviews were conducted (and audio recorded) with mentors in the program. The mentors were asked to talk about their roles and how they saw students adjusting to college. They were asked about accommodations for minority and international students and what they did, if anything, to help such students make the transition. They also were asked to talk about their perceptions of a diverse and multicultural environment. During this same time period, two interviews with administrators were conducted (and audio recorded). The administrators had distinct roles: one was responsible for the coordination of the entire LEAP program; the other coordinated faculty meetings, training, and workshops. Each was asked about her role in developing a multicultural environment as well as how she perceived student adjustment. Each was also asked about the LEAP policy documents such as web pages, brochures, mailing, and mission statements and if they felt the actual LEAP environment reflected the written statements. These interviews were also audio recorded.

Analysis

In total, four sets of interviews were audio taped: interviews with faculty, minority students, mentors, and administrators. Each researcher transcribed several interviews; each interview was transcribed verbatim. The researcher read over the transcript several times. Following "immersion into the data " (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998), the

researcher devised two sets of codes for every statement or series of statements. The first code was a phrase summarizing the text. Here the researcher tried to refrain from any form of interpretation. After the first level of coding was performed for the entire transcript, the researcher engaged in the second layer, or open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998). This consisted of identifying some symbol (metaphor), theme, or other interpretation of what was said with consideration to the research questions. After the individual researcher had completed the two layers of coding, she gave the document to one or both of the other researchers for their comments. Additional comments or disagreements were marked in different colored pen on the same copy used by the first researcher.

This process continued until all the transcripts had two layers of coding. Upon completion of this task, the researchers then constructed a list of every emergent theme or metaphor. The three worked in conjunction to put the data together by connecting categories based on interpretative perspectives on diversity and multiculturalism. This process is known as axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998).

Validity

Although a qualitative study can not have true "internal validity," the researchers supported their assertion of "correctness" by the process of how the findings were portrayed, described, and interpreted (Maxwell, 1996). By transcribing the tapes verbatim and having several researchers code each transcript using both open and axial coding, they have ensured that the findings are trustworthy.

Triangulation

Many qualitative studies combine several methods in order to ensure trustworthiness. Since this study employs several different methods, similar findings among the different methods will strengthen the outcomes of this research project. Research collaboration during the entire project ensures strength in the interpretation of

the data. A critical examination of the university policy statements and LEAP purpose documents both in written text and down loaded from web sites along with 20 student culture papers and 8 open-ended essays provided textual documents for analysis. Additionally, interviews with representatives from each of the "key players," and field notes from the participant-observations allowed the researchers with sufficient data to study the LEAP program on several levels. On one level the researchers gained insight into the most diverse pride in the program. They expected an environment of multiculturalism and diverse voices within that pride. On a broader level, the researchers were able to put together a picture the entire LEAP culture itself by looking a at the program through the lens of the targeted pride.

Transferability

The purpose of this study was not to generalize but to interpret findings exclusively for the LEAP program. The results of the study may serve as a model for other programs structured very similarly to LEAP, but that was not the intended goal for this research project. The goal was to investigate LEAP as it is within the context of beginning freshman students at a large northeastern university, university administrators involved with LEAP, mentors who live with these students, and university faculty who taught LEAP courses during this session.

RESULTS

Five categories each with supporting metaphors or other themes emerged from axial coding (See Table 1). These categories emerged as a result of comparing metaphors and themes from both minority and majority interviews and surveys. The categories included Diverse Culture Vs. Mainstream Culture, Reality of Diversity Vs. Perceived Diversity, Awareness Vs. Lack of Awareness, Educational Expectations, and Identity Issues Vs. Lack of Identity Issues.

Diverse Culture Vs. Mainstream Culture

This theme was dominant among students and faculty in talking about the university atmosphere, the LEAP program environment, and their past personal experiences. The metaphors and themes tended to support a mainstream, or majority voice, or they tended to support the minority perspectives. For example, several minority students used a salad bowl metaphor in talking about American culture. They explained that they did not see one culture but many diverse religions, races, and philosophies that remain distinct within one country but that come together under the label of America just as a salad contains distinct pieces of vegetables and other food under the label of "salad." One minority student explained:

> "As society advances and cultures collide in the so-called 'melting pot' to which this nation is referred, I begin to realize that the cultures and traditions that exist in this country often intensify in magnitude."

Interestingly, many of majority faculty and students used the metaphor of "melting pot" to depict their views of American culture. For example, one instructor disclosed, "I really expected P_____ University to be the melting pot." Through contextual analysis, the findings point to the emergence of only one (American) culture in non-minority conversations. In minority transcripts, the representation of diverse cultures within a society is much more common. One majority student in trying to point out that he saw few cultural differences stated, "Hospitality is the same in any culture." Another majority student echoed what unfortunately seem to be stereotypes in educational textbooks (See Kearney & Plax, 1996), "Diversity makes us like a big tapestry or quilt. We are one cloth woven with different colors and patterns."

One mainstream type of culture emerged from the conversations and surveys from majority students. In recounting their personal past experiences as well as talking about historical events, their views did not seem to be open to alternative explanations

or interpretations of what occurred. That is, their comments pointed to a mono-interpretation of culture and history. Contrariwise, minority students considered more alternative perspectives or multiple interpretations of historical events. For example, one minority student passionately proclaimed:

> "The irony in the founding of America is that they are fighting the English, right? And, there is BIG celebration about the Fourth of July and how they are free from the English while they had slaves. It is SO mindboggling!"

Reality of Diversity Vs. Perceived Diversity

This theme was supported by data from all of the sources—students, faculty, mentors, administrators, and policy documents. The category name comes from a summary of the data. Diversity is a continual struggle for minorities; non-minorities in this study tended to feel that there already is much diversity or that diversity is not a huge concern. Majorities did not seem able to identify with diversity, while minorities readily identified with diversity matters. For this section, the focus is on policy documents, administrators' viewpoints, and mentor's responses.

University policy documents (including web pages) contain themes such as preparation for a future diverse culture, advancement of diversity awareness, and the promotion of multicultural education. However, examination of LEAP program documents produced no references to diversity or multiculturalism. The director of the LEAP program acknowledged that LEAP policy documents do not include diversity references:

> "Well, there is no statement to deal with [diversity/multiculturalism] that I know of, and certainly while it is not a stated duty of the program, as director, I am not to encourage neither am I to discourage diversity. There is nothing in the LEAP goals and objectives."

Later in the interview, she commented, "We would like to increase the awareness to what it means to have a different background." Unfortunately, LEAP policy does not reflect this attitude toward diversity and multiculturalism.

Contextual analysis revealed that the role of the mentor is unclear. In interviews, the mentors acknowledged that they did not know how to interpret "tips about college life" printed on LEAP fliers sent to prospective students prior to the program. The flier indicates that mentor duties include "help with social activities and tips about college life." It appears, however, that mentors are not trained in these areas. In discussing the role of mentors in helping the new students adjust, the LEAP director stated:

> "How to integrate the various courses, the library and the computer, what the first year experience is like for students, and active and integrated learning—those were the four issues that we trained [mentors] in."

What the program literature says about mentor responsibilities, what the university says its program goals are, and what is actually practiced within the LEAP program by mentors unearth some contradictions. The program literature duties include "help[ing] with social activities." One of the two mentors exhibited unawareness that social activity planning was even her responsibility. "Well, I know that as a mentor in the LEAP program, we try to plan things, but Residence Life, they are the ones that plan most of the big activities." The university boasts of its commitment to diversity and a multicultural education. Yet the minority mentor in her interview said there was no mention at all of these issues in LEAP meetings and training sessions.

> "No, no. We were told nothing about students with special needs during our training. Nothing about multiculturalism, nothing. As far as religious or racial differences goes, we did not touch on things like that. We had a lot of listening, but basically to be available and to be a friend to people."

An interesting difference emerged between the majority and minority mentor in response to their role in coordinating the social aspects of the LEAP program. As stated previously, the majority mentor felt that she really had no role in the students' social lives. In contrast, the minority mentor explained that her role in planning social activities stemmed from her personal experience.

> "My pride, yes. Because for me not to share my culture with my students is as if I am not talking to them or do not get to know them or do not take the time to do so. So, I am more involved with them.

Of additional interest, this minority mentor referred to the students with whom she lived and went to class as "my students" repeatedly throughout the interview. She seemed to go beyond what was required of her position obligations and seemed to embody the spirit of the university goals to promote a multicultural environment.

Awareness Vs. Lack of Awareness

Content analysis of all the transcripts evinced an awareness of diversity issues among minority students, the minority mentor, and all of the faculty members. Non-minority students and administrators indicated a lack of awareness of diversity issues.

Most of the minority students interviewed felt that overall the LEAP program did not reflect diversity. And even though the targeted pride included 6 out of 20 minority students, one minority member said, "I think our pride is quite white dominated. There are only four minorities in our pride and the rest are whites." (The student did not think of the two Jewish students as minorities, although both of the Jewish students considered themselves as minority students.) This minority student's awareness was guided by his visual awareness; that is, he did not see many racial differences, which led to his belief that there was a lack of diversity. In espousing the opposite view, one of the non-minority students in the class looked at the pride and the entire campus as diverse. "Coming to P_____ is really neat. I get to see all different types of people with different

heritages and very diverse backgrounds." One of the minority students went farther than stating that the pride is not very diverse. He not only felt that the pride and the entire LEAP program lacked diversity in actual having minority students, but he also felt that there was no appreciation for diverse culture. Contextual analysis showed he felt there was pressure on the minorities to assimilate into "American culture."

> "Minorities are trying to be like the majorities by dressing like them, eating the same or similar food, and speaking with the same accent even though they might not be able to. My perception of diversity is quite negative."

If there was an awareness of diversity among the majority students, it tended to be an awareness of religious differences. Several students described ceasing to attend a religious school and entering public school education.

> "For eight years I attended a private Catholic school. Not real diverse. Then for high school I attended a public school. My eyes were opened to a whole new world. I am so glad they were."

Non-minority students overall felt that LEAP as well as the university provided a diverse climate. One student said of diversity in general, "There are so many different people in this world that it is almost impossible not to have a class full of diversity." Another student felt that he could appreciate diversity as well as minority persons. "I don't feel that [the class being predominantly white] makes much difference in any particular way. It just happens to be the case."

The two mentors responded very differently when each was asked how she felt she handled diversity issues. The non-minority mentor responded, "I don't know if it comes up that often." The interviewer's notes at the end of that transcript indicate she did not feel the interviewee grasped the concept of diversity or diversity issues. Quite unlike the first mentor, the minority mentor talked about diversity not being an issue for many of the students although she felt very aware of such issues, particularly when new

freshmen make the transition into college. She recounted her experience the week before as the students arrived:

> "I tried. I went around when they [minority LEAP students] moved in, and I introduced myself to the parents and the people that were around on my floor and in the building. Not that I have to do that, but I know what it was like. I know what it is like coming here on campus and feeling you are the only one."

One plausible explanation for an overall lack of awareness of diversity issues by non-minorities corresponds to the majority of white students. Without much representation, it may be that minority voices go unheard. P_____ University's undergraduate student population is 87% white, 11% black, and 2% Asian, Hispanic, and other minorities. One of the majority faculty members commented, "I really expected P____ to be the melting pot, and I don't believe that it met those expectations at all." Even though she uses the melting pot metaphor, which is not the metaphor that the minority students in the study used to describe American culture, the intent seems to be expressing her disappointment at the lack of diversity. Contextual analysis showed that she is not merely referring to visible lack of diversity (that is, other races represented more) but a lack of diverse thinking and open-mindedness. Another faculty member responded similarly, "LEAP does not reflect diversity. P___ is rural, middle-of-nowhere and does not have a high ratio of African-Americans or other cultures." The minority instructor agreed that neither the LEAP program nor the university has been able to promote a diverse culture on campus. She indicated her willingness and efforts to promote diversity.

> "I guess my students probably consider me a lot more diverse. I kind of tie in my own personal experiences in with a lot of stuff we teach. And, I think even if they don't get diversity anywhere else, at least with my classroom, they will get some [diversity]."

As the researchers learned that the non-existence of a non-diverse campus environment was likely due to a majority white "culture" and belief system, one researcher asked the administrator responsible for LEAP faculty coordination about recruitment and retention of faculty and students from diverse backgrounds. Her response and defensive tone (interviewer's notes) support the growing gap between a majority perspective on what is believed to be diversity and what the minority argued is not really diversity.

> "Why do I think this is a university goal? I guess you should ask [the university president]. My guess would be because in the current culture, [diversity] is an area to which more attention has been given. And I think it is being reflected on university campuses. You know, I am not speaking from expertise. That is only my reading of the local newspapers or something."

Educational Expectations

The value of education and willingness to talk about educational experiences seem to be the major distinctions between majority and minority students. Only one non-minority student addressed diversity in speaking of her high school years: "Because of this lack of diversity, there was often a limiting learning environment." Minority students talked more openly about educational opportunities. One student said,

> "I have immense pride and joy in my heart. I have proved to myself that my talents in music and my wide range of general education have given me the key to universal knowledge."

The idea of working hard in school seems to be a common parental expectation among the minority students. These parents believe that in order to achieve success, one has to work harder than everybody else. One student echoed this thought: "In line with the philosophy that if one wants to succeed as a minority, one must exert twice the effort as everyone else." Another student related the conflict between her and her parents:

> "My parents insisted that I should study and that I should be valedictorian and ace all my advanced placement classes. I feel that as a Korean, I am an underachiever like no one before me; and personally, I am not disappointed in myself."

Throughout this paper there is an underlying assumption that minority students by definition of minority status automatically are exposed to diversity. One African-American student talked about his educational experience in his elementary school and showed that this hypothesis is incorrect. His story is so vivid that it is captured in its entirety below:

> "Multicultural experience did not enter until high school. The elementary high school I went to was totally black, and the middle school I went to was about 99 percent black and 1 percent Asian. It was uncultured—some of the most uncultured, uneducated people that I ever met in my life. And it's sad because there's so many positive people like me who are just smart and have the intelligence and could do it. But nobody ever showed them they could do it. Nobody ever showed them, 'You don't have to be this way.' So that's the way they reacted. And just, it was horrible. You know, hanging people out of the window by their ankles. I'm not exaggerating in anything that I say. Hanging people out of the window by their ankles. Spraying, you know, uh, starting fires. They brought a sawed off shotgun in my sixth grade year. Three students brought a sawed off shotgun into my school and went from class to class terrorizing people, you know. Throwing desks out the window. Teachers can't teach because fights break out in the classroom."

This student's "non-diverse" educational experience underscores two important ideas. First, he claimed, "But nobody ever showed them they could do it. Nobody ever showed them, 'You don't have to be this way.' Education should show young people that there is an alternative way to behave and think. Education should help to motivate

young people in a positive way. Second, he summarized what happened when there was a lack of leadership and role modeling in the school, "Teachers can't teach because fights break out in the classroom."

Identity

Identity emerged as the fifth category of themes and metaphors. As expected, there were no majority voices (students, faculty, mentor, or administrators) who mentioned identity issues. Quite interestingly, two of the three Asian students said they identified closely with white American culture, dismissing their parents' cultural beliefs. These two students reported that they had no struggles with identity issues. The third Asian student expressed the idea of identification with American culture but indicated that part of his traditional upbringing will always be with him:

> "I am now able to conclude the nature vs. nurture debate. A person will always be affected by heritage. There is never a way to avoid it. However, when he or she is displaced and put into another country, he or she will adapt and change according to their surroundings."

For the two Jewish students, experiencing a religious event helped to shape their identity as a Jew. One student recalled:

> "When I was fourteen, my family and my grandparents' synagogue went to Israel. At fourteen, I was still fairly skeptical about my religion and its values. However, after only two short weeks, I found myself doing a 180. After visiting the Holocaust Museum and standing in front of the Western Wall, I felt something deep in my heart. After that time, I had a greater respect for my diversity and others as well."

The African-American student indicated that his identity was strongly affiliated with race and with a continual struggle with racial issues. He articulated:

> "But the struggle isn't in being a minority—it's in being born black. The struggle isn't being born Asian. The struggle isn't being born anything—a European

> American in the United States of America. Why? Because this country was founded—I don't care what the constitution says, the Declaration of Independence says, it was founded for white people."

DISCUSSION

The study took an in-depth look at the LEAP program at P___ University. We analyzed interview transcripts (from 2 administrators, 2 mentors, 3 faculty members, and 5 minority students within the pride) and written classroom observations. We also analyzed surveys from 8 of the 20 students, written papers on cultural histories from all 20 students, and policy documents from LEAP and the university using a grounded theory approach. [1]

The first two research questions asked the following:

R1: How are multiculturalism and diversity reflected in the LEAP program? And

R2: How are multiculturalism and diversity perceived by faculty, administrators, mentors, and students in the LEAP program?

The analyses showed that overall, there is not much diversity and multiculturalism shown throughout the LEAP program. Moreover, administrators did not feel that these issues were of present importance. Additionally, while majority students felt there was diversity in the LEAP program and throughout the university, minority students felt there was no real diversity. The faculty members also saw a lack of diversity within the student body and also a lack of promotion of diversity. In fact, one instructor felt that some "diversity" functions may encourage segregation:

> "[The university] have all this stuff—Asian Club, European Club, and Miss Black P___ University. But is that bringing in the diversity so that everyone is a part of it? Or, are you segregating everyone once again? And, that is how I see it."

---

[1] See Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998.

Both of the mentors acknowledged that diversity is not a large issue on that campus. However, in contrast to the non-minority mentor, the minority mentor knew what it was like to feel like a small minority and therefore visited with all the new minority LEAP students when they arrived to make them feel welcome.

The third research question asked,

> R3: Does LEAP through the promotion of multiculturalism and diversity provide a facilitating environment for new students, particularly minority students?

The answer to this question rested on comparing the policy statements of the university and the policy statements of the LEAP program with survey answers and interview responses from students and interview responses from faculty, mentors, and administrators. No LEAP documents mentioned diversity or a multicultural learning environment even though the university documents promoted commitment to diversity as a strong goal. While the minority mentor, minority students, and faculty expressed concern that there should be more done to further an awareness of diversity issues and establish a stronger multicultural education, administrators and the majority mentor did not feel that students had many diversity issues. More interesting, the majority students felt that there was much diversity on campus and within the LEAP program!

Implications

This exploratory study reveals a gap in the communication network among LEAP officials, specifically concerning diversity issues. Radically different opinions emerged, including whether or not a diversity goal for the program exists. Additionally, even if there is an implicit goal for promoting diversity, different officials and "key players" seemed to espouse different interpretations of diversity and how diversity issues should be recognized and addressed. Gathering and interpreting the perceptions of faculty, students, and mentors enabled the researchers to pinpoint extreme differences, particularly in minority and majority perspectives. Future studies investigating these

differences and the impact on the program may be valuable in creating LEAP curriculum guidelines for the future.

LIMITATIONS

One limitation is that having two international graduate students on the research team may have influenced the way that the data were interpreted and analyzed. However, because the major researcher is European-American, the researchers felt that the various orientations and perspectives led to a more rounded analysis and therefore reflect a truer depiction of the cultural aspects of the LEAP program. The researchers felt fortunate to have different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and used the differences in orientation to extend the process of interpretation.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, results are not intended to serve as generalizations for large, predominantly white universities. However, other similar summer programs may benefit from the analyses and may be able to devise a similar study to explore the nature of diversity and promotion of multiculturalism within the program. Further, the purpose was to examine one individual program and interpret its multicultural nature. The research findings maybe used as a starting point for the white administrators and faculty in realizing that minority voices are not reflected in the mentor training, faculty training, in written documents, or necessarily in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

In concluding the paper, the researchers suggest that little concern over diversity issues apart from the minority voices is a product of an absence of education. While the promotion of multicultural goals exists, in actuality they are not enforced. A serious assessment of minority concerns needs to occur if the goals found in mission statements are to reflect reality.

We offer several suggestions. First, academic excellence should foster social and cultural diversity and not just individual achievement. Students come from varied backgrounds, families, religions, ethnic and racial heritages, and socio-economic classes. Creating a deeper awareness of these aspects may strengthen the program in that people become more sensitive to differences. Second, even on campuses where minorities are small in numbers, a multicultural education, starting with incoming freshmen in a summer program, can show that only one view of mainstream culture is simply not representative of reality.

References

Agada, J. (1998). Multicultural education and the emerging paradigm: An essay in cultural epistemology. The Urban Review, 30(1), 77-95.

Brady, J. (1995). Schooling young children: A feminist pedagogy for liberatory learning. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Kanpol, B. (1994). Critical pedagogy: An introduction. Albany: SUNY Press.

Kearney, P., & Plax, T. G. (1996). Public speaking in a diverse society. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.

Logan, C. R., & Salisbury-Glennon, J. D. (1999). The effects of a learner-centered undergraduate community of learners on motivation and cognitive learning strategies. Unpublished manuscript.

Miles, M. S., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rotheram-Borus, M. J., & Wyche, K. F. (1994). Ethic differences in identity development in the United States. In S. L. Archer (Eds.), Interventions for adolescent identity development (pp. 62-83). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. Newbury Park: Sage.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. (2nd ed.) Newbury Park: Sage.

Young, R. L. (1998). Rethinking racism and assimilation. Multicultural Education, 6(1), 6-29.

Table 1
Comparison of Major Themes and Metaphors

Minority Views	Majority Views
Diverse Culture	**Mainstream Culture**
Deviation from the standard	Standard
Salad bowl metaphor	Melting pot, tapestry, quilt metaphors
Multiple interpretations of cultural or historical events	Mono-interpretation of cultural of historical events
Further separation into groups	Assimilation into one culture
Reality of Diversity	**Perceived Diversity**
Importance of diversity (expectation)	Feels there already is diversity
Feeling of exclusion; pressure for inclusion	Not much experience with diversity
Awareness	**Lack of Awareness**
Exposure to diversity issues and personal cultural experiences and interests	Lack of exposure to diversity issues leads to Indifference
Willingness for involvement of diversity issues	Lack of experience leads to unawareness
Perception of pride as not diverse	Lack of willingness to be involved with diversity issues
	Perception of pride as diverse
Education	**Education**
The value of higher education	Parental expectations perceived as positive
Parental expectations perceived as negative	Self-achievement not mentioned
Self-achievement	Some courses actually segregate
Promotion of multiculturalism and awareness of diversity	Absence of diversity limits learning
Identity	**Identity**
Religious experience forms identity	No real identity issues
Allegiance to Black community	
Race is important	
Struggle with two different cultures as part of identity	

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

Communicating Diversity: A Study of the
Multicultural Climate in a Summer Academic Program

The purpose of this pilot study was to describe the phenomenon of multiculturalism and diversity in a six-week summer program known as LEAP (Learning Edge Academic Program) for beginning freshmen at a major eastern university. The program allows incoming freshman who meet criteria including above-average SAT scores to be part of a new collaborative learning project by taking two classes that are integrated through the instructors working together to synthesize course material.

In order to create a picture of the program, the key players such as administrators, mentors, instructors, and students were represented in the study. Also examined were policy documents from both the university and the special program. The research study was designed to investigate if and what accommodations are made for minority and international students.

Methods employed included analyzing policy statements of the program and the university. Through convenient and purposeful sampling, students, faculty, administrators, and mentors were selected to participate in the study. Focusing on the students, five intensive interviews were conducted with minority students from one class who took both philosophy and effective speaking courses together. Eight "majority" students discussed diversity and multiculturalism in open-ended surveys. Three participant observations occurred in the speech communication course to determine what kind of learning environment existed in the classroom. All students wrote cultural papers, which consisted of their backgrounds and major role models as well as diversity experiences and cultural influences while growing up. Other interviews were conducted

with faculty, administrators, and mentors in order to gather perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity in the program.

Five themes emerged from the analyses: Diverse Culture vs. Mainstream Culture, Reality vs. Expectations, Diversity Awareness vs. Lack of Awareness, Education, and Identity. In a comparison of minority students and "majority" or Caucasian students in interviews, clear differences arose from the data including differences in metaphor uses to different perceptions of "American" culture to defining diversity.

Recommendations for future studies include a larger, more comprehensive study to thoroughly examine multicultural aspects of the program as well as more actively carrying out policy statements. More accommodations are needed for minority and international students in order to more accurately reflect the policy statements of the university and the special program examined.

Key Terms:

Multiculturalism
Diversity
Ethnicity
Identity
Minority Issues